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# HARVARD LAW REVIEW

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WILLIAM CHENEY BROWN, 1st Lieutenant, Quartermaster Corps, died of pneumonia, in the city of Washington, January 19, 1919. He was then on duty in charge of the Admiralty Section of the Embarkation Service, in the office of the Quartermaster General.

Brown was a graduate of Harvard College of the Class of 1914, and of the Law School of the Class of 1917. During his last two years at the law school he was an Editor of this REVIEW, and during his last year its treasurer. He left the Law School in the spring of 1917 as soon as the REVIEW could spare him, and attended the first Officers' Training Camp at Fort Myer, Va. He was there commissioned in the Quartermaster Corps, with which corps he served until his death. Brown was thus more than well started towards a position as one of those useful members of the bar, who are at once well trained and competent as lawyers, and intelligent as men of business. His friends, and among these his friends of the REVIEW are not the least, know best how ill his good sense and good humor can be spared.

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THE Earl of Reading, Lord Chief Justice of England, has recently presented to the Harvard Law School a letter written by Will. Blackstone at the age of twenty-one from his lodgings in Arundel Street, London, to a legal friend in the country. The letter describes so well Blackstone's method of study, expresses so clearly, in words almost literally repeated in the Commentaries twenty years later, his view of the wholeness of the law, and is withal so pleasant a document that it has been thought worth while to print it in full here.

A passage from the letter is quoted in the account of Blackstone's life in D. N. B. and longer quotations are printed in volume 2 of the LAW STUDENTS' MAGAZINE, 1845-46. The original has been framed and hung in Langdell Hall South.

The letter follows:

“To Mr. Richmond  
at Sparsholt  
near  
Wantage  
Berks.

“DEAR SIR, — You have been so kind as to tell me, yt a Line now & then from me wd not be unacceptable to You. 'Tis this that has drawn upon You ye present Trouble, for wch You have Nobody but Yourself to blame.

“I have been in Town about ten Days, & am tolerably well settled in my new Habitation (wch is at Mr. Stokes's a Limner in Arundel-Street) The People of ye House seem honest, civil & industrious; & my Lodgings are in themselves cheerful, retired, &, as every Body tells me, extremely reasonable. Nor I do want Opportunities of Gallantry (if I have Inclination to improve them) there lodging in ye same House a young Lady of extraordinary Accomplishments & a very ample Fortune; but alas! She has, together with ye Riches, ye Complexion also of a Jew. So that She is not like to prove a very formidable Rival to — Coke upon Littleton.

“Coke I have not yet ventured to attack, but have (according to Ch. J. Reeves's Plan) begun with Littleton only. Two together wd be too much for a Hercules, but I am in great Hopes of managing them one after ye other. I have stormed one Book of Littleton, & opened my Trenches before ye 2d; & I can with Pleasure say I have met with no Difficulty of Consequence; There is one thing indeed, & but one, I cd not understand in ye first Book, wch is a mere matter of Speculation: & is in short this. The Donees in Frank-Marriage shall do no Service (but that of Fealty) to ye Donor or his Heirs till ye 4th Degree be past. Of wch 4 Degrees ye Donee shall be said to be ye first. § 20. To prove wch last Assertion Littleton produces a Writ of Right of Ward (as you may see pag. 23. b.) Now with me ye Question is, how the Writ wch he produces proves ye Point he wd have it do, viz. that ye Donee in Frank-Marriage is ye first of ye four Degrees. You will observe that this is a Point of mere Curiosity, Frank-Marriage being now out of Use. But I don't love to march into an unknown Country, without securing every Post behind me: & it is a greater Slur upon a General to leave a slight Place untaken, than one more hard of Access. Besides, in my apprehension, (& I shd be glad to know your Opinion of ye matter) ye Learning out of use is as necessary to a Beginner as that of every Day's Practise. There seem in ye modern Law to be so many References to ye antient Tenures & Services, that a Man who wd understand ye Reasons, ye Grounds, & Original of what is Law at this Day must look back to what it was formerly; otherwise, his Learning will be both confused & superficial.

“I have sometimes thought that ye Common Law, as it stood in Littleton's Days, resembled a regular Edifice: where ye Apartments

were properly disposed, leading one into another without Confusion; where every part was subservient to ye whole, all uniting in one beautiful Symmetry: & every Room had its distinct Office allotted to it. But as it is now, swoln, shrunk, curtailed, enlarged, altered & mangled by various & contradictory Statutes &c; it resembles ye same Edifice, with many of its most useful Parts pulled down, with preposterous Additions in other Places, of different Materials & coarse Workmanship: according to ye Whim, or Prejudice, or private Convenience of ye Builders. By wch means the Communication of ye Parts is destroyed, & their Harmony quite annihilated; & now it remains a huge, irregular Pile, with many noble Apartments, tho' awkwardly put together, & some of them of no visible Use at present. But if one desires to know why they were built, to what End or Use, how they communicated with ye rest, & ye like; he must necessarily carry in his Head ye Model of ye old House, wch will be ye only Clew to guide him thro' this new Labyrinth.

"I have trespassed so far on yr Patience, that I am almost afraid to venture any farther. But I happen'd t'other day upon a Case in a Civil Law Book, wch I should be glad to know how you imagine Chancery wd decide. A Man dies & leaves his Wife with Child: & by his Will ordains that, if his Wife brought forth a Son; ye Son shd have 2 3ds & ye Mother one 3d of ye Estate: If a Daughter, then ye Wife to have 2, & ye Daughter 1 3d. The Wife brought Twins, a Boy & a Girl. Qu. How shall ye Estate be divided? NB. We must suppose a Jointure, or something, in Bar of Dower.

"We are quite in ye Dark as to Intelligence here in Town; You must observe what strange, perplexed, incoherent Accts ye Gazette affords us. I fear our Loss in Scotland was greater than they care to own. But at ye same time, even Victory must lessen ye Number of ye Rebels, while we are continually recruiting. There is a Talk of assessing all personal Estates & raising thereby 3 millions. If so ye Assessment must run high.

"I was sensibly concerned at hearing of Mat. [?] Richmond's Illness; but hope, by not hearing lately anything further, that all is well again. My hearty Goodwishes attend him, & my Cousin, who I shd think might take a Trip to Town this Spring. My Aunt of Worting [?] will be at Lincolns-inn-fields about Easter; & probably wd be glad of a Companion to partake of some of ye gay Diversions.

"Excuse, Sir, this tedious Length, wch I promise never to be guilty of again, & when You have an idle hour, be so good as to think of, Sir,

"Your most obliged humble Servant

"WILL. BLACKSTONE"

ARUNDEL-STREET  
Jan. 28. 1745

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## BOOK REVIEWS

THE CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, 1817-1917. Cambridge: Harvard Law School Association. 1918. \$1.50.

To an Englishman trained at Oxford or Cambridge, the Harvard Law School is by far the most interesting educational experiment in America. The average American college has contributed little to the technique of academic life. It has